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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ECUADOR ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SOUTH AMERICAN
INTEGRATION

1. (SBU) On December 2, President Gutierrez discussed with the Ambassador his upcoming trip to Peru. He will participate there in a meeting of Andean presidents and later join South American leaders in signing a declaration to move toward the creation of a Community of South American Nations. Gutierrez said he believed the accord represented an important step toward further South American cooperation and integration. The Ambassador welcomed any effort to promote trade and cooperation, and overcome debilitating border disputes. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Gutierrez said he would visit Peru December 5-9, and would later attend a meeting of Amazonian presidents in Brazil December 18-19. The Peru visit was especially exciting, he said, to ratify recent agreements between the CAN and MERCOSUR which would spur South American integration over the next 10-20 years. Gutierrez expressed hope that the accord would spur continental cooperation in the short term, specifically in construction of a South American road system.

3. (U) Andean Parliament Vice President Freddy Ehlers had earlier raised the significance of the Peru events with us. Ehlers, a passionate proponent of the dream of South American unity, told us the Andean Parliament had approved (by a vote of 24-1) a motion to promote its own integration with MERCOSUR's parliament. South American Presidents would ratify the accord in Lima on December 9. Ehlers added that the media had missed the significance of this accord, which is an important step toward eventual political integration of all South American countries into one nation. A united South America would be in U.S. interests, Ehlers reasoned; without it, each country will always blame its ills on us. He suggested that an expression of general USG support for South American political integration would be helpful to the cause.

Comment

4. (SBU) Gutierrez was clearly fishing for a USG response, perhaps concerned that the USG might see these efforts as a challenge to our efforts toward a hemispheric trade accord. Realizing that South American integration is a very long ways off, the Ambassador told President Gutierrez that efforts to promote hemispheric cooperation are always welcome. She reiterated the USG interest in increasing hemispheric cooperation through our free trade negotiation efforts both regionally (through CAFTA and Andean FTA negotiations) and the FTAA.

KENNEY